



SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ORGANIZATION **HANDBOOK**



Sam Houston State University
**Campus Activities
& Involvement**

2026-2027

All RSOs—regardless of recognition status—must comply with this handbook, the Student Code of Conduct, all TSUS Rules and Regulations, and applicable local, state, and federal laws, including the Stop Campus Hazing Act of 2024. Compliance is a condition of maintaining recognized status.

⚠ Failure to comply with any provision of this handbook may result in suspension or withdrawal of university recognition, in addition to further disciplinary action.

1. Naming, Membership & Officer Standards

Naming Rules

- RSO names must be unique and not duplicate any existing program, department, or student organization.
- GSOs may not use “Sam Houston State University,” “SHSU,” or any abbreviation thereof in their name. Only SSOs may include the university name.
- Name changes are only permitted if: the org has been inactive for more than one academic year; the org has changed national affiliation; or the current name is out of compliance.
- RSOs may not dissolve solely to rename an organization with the same purpose.

Membership & Officer Standards

Standard	Requirement
Minimum Members	5 currently enrolled SHSU students at all times
Non-Discrimination	Membership cannot be denied based on race, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics (20 U.S.C. §1681)
Officer Eligibility	Currently enrolled; minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA; not on disciplinary probation
Advisor Requirements	Full-time SHSU faculty/staff; over age 21; not a current SHSU student; advises no more than 3 RSOs (Texas Education Code §51.9361). Advisors must only advise orgs on their respective campuses (i.e. COM employee advises COM orgs only)
Advisor Financial Limits	May not access, manage, sign checks, receipt funds, or receive financial mail for a GSO account (TSUS Chapter VI, Sec. 6.2)
Advisor Replacement	Must be appointed within 10 calendar days of resignation or removal

2. Organization Classifications (GSO vs. SSO)

Every RSO is classified by Campus Activities & Involvement as one of the following. Classification is based on the org's relationship to the university, the scope/complexity of its activities, its level of risk, and its funding source. Classification cannot be changed without written CAI approval, and CAI has final say — including the right to reclassify an org at any time.

General Student Organization (GSO)

An independent, student-run, third-party entity operating with general university support. Eligible for Campus Life Development Fund (CLDF) and Student Organization Travel Fund (SOTF) support, tabling, and organization fairs.

Sponsored Student Organization (SSO)

Directly affiliated with a University Unit (department/program) and functions as an extension of that Unit. Receives institutionally dedicated resources (funding, space, equipment, stipends) but is not eligible for CLDF/SOTF funding and must follow all University policies and procedures as part of the Unit.

Requirement	General Student Org. (GSO)	Sponsored Student Org. (SSO)
Annual Registration (by Aug 1)	Yes	Yes
SORT (officer training)	Yes	Yes
RSOM (required meeting)	Yes	Yes
Additional training	Not typically	Yes, if assigned
Campus Life Development Fund	Yes	No
Student Organization Travel Fund	Yes	No
Use of university name/trademark	Not typically	Yes, with IMC approval
Staff support	Full-time SHSU advisor	Full-time SHSU advisor (typically within sponsoring unit)
Bank account	Off-campus account if handling money; no "SHSU" in name	SHSU account, if funded
Tax exemption	No	Yes — only for SHSU-fund purchases from internal account
Must follow	Federal/state/local law; TSUS & SHSU policy	Same, plus all University requirements & prohibitions

3. Registration & Training Compliance

Requirement	Rule
Annual Registration	Must be submitted via BearkathHQ; opens April 15, closes August 1 (COM orgs: by September 1)
Registration Content	Current officer list, minimum 5 members confirmed, updated constitution, updated contact information
Student Organization Required Training (SORT)	President + 1 officer complete via BearkathHQ by September 15; relay content to full membership
Required Student Organization Meeting (RSOM)	1 member attends in full at start of fall semester; relays content to full membership roster
BearkathHQ Updates	About page, roster, and constitution must be updated within 5 business days of any change
Constitution Changes	Must be emailed to Campus Activities & Involvement (and FSL/Club Sports/COM as applicable) for approval before uploading to BearkathHQ
Training Records	Retained by Campus Activities & Involvement for 3 academic years

⚠ Organizations that fail to meet registration or training requirements will be placed on inactive status for the entire Fall semester and until all requirements are satisfied. Organizations will then be reviewed for recognition during the following Spring semester.

4. Financial Compliance

- GSOs handling money must open an off-campus bank account that does not include any form of "SHSU" in its name (SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-14). SSOs must maintain a university account managed by SHSU staff.
- No RSO may use the university's tax ID number for off-campus banking. SSOs may use it only to eliminate sales tax on purchases from an internal SHSU account.
- Advisors may not use personal funds for organizational expenses with intent of reimbursement.
- RSOs are not automatically tax-exempt. Tax-exempt organizations must file annual IRS information returns. Each organization is solely responsible for its own tax obligations.

- Raffles: Only RSOs qualifying under the Texas Charitable Raffle Enabling Act may hold raffles. Submit a Raffle Request Form at least 10 business days in advance. Prizes may not be cash and may not exceed \$75,000 in value. No more than four (4) raffles per calendar year; no two raffles simultaneously.

5. Marketing & Branding Rules

- All promotional materials must be approved by Campus Activities & Involvement (or Club Sports, FSL, or COM, as applicable) before purchase or distribution. Designs must not reference drugs, alcohol, or include derogatory language.
- GSOs **may not use official SHSU** logos, marks, or trademarked imagery. GSOs may reference the university in a locational sense only (e.g., “[Org] at SHSU”) in plain text.
- All RSOs must use a licensed SHSU vendor for any materials incorporating the SHSU name or marks. Written permission from licensing@shsu.edu is required before reselling any branded items.
- Campus bulletin board postings require a physical approval stamp from Campus Activities & Involvement (LSC 215). Events referenced in postings must be approved in BearkathQ first.
- GSOs may not obtain SHSU email addresses or submit IT/IMC requests.
- GSOs may not promote on Blackboard announcements.
- All marketing materials must be submitted in BearkathQ for approval. This includes event flyers, logos, apparel, promotional materials, recruitment flyers, posters, LSC TV Ads, digital ads, yard signs, banners, social media icons, etc.

6. Risk Management & Event Rules

Annual Risk Management Training

All RSOs must complete annual risk management training per Texas Education Code §51.9361. Training is completed via SORT (see Section 2). Topics include: alcohol and drug possession; overdose response; hazing; sexual misconduct; fire safety and weapons; student travel; event behavior; disability accommodations; and RSO risk management policy.

Event Submission Requirements

All RSO Level 2 and 3 events must be submitted and approved in BearkathQ within the timelines below, including tabling events, fairs, and pop-up events. The only exception is events that qualify as expressive activities under the SHSU Expressive Activity Policy. Same-day reservations can be made in the Lowman Student Center for Level 1 events only.

Level	Event Type	Submit By	Approvers
Level 1 – Low Risk	General tabling (simple day-of events for informational or fundraising purposes); recurring general body meetings	Does not need to be submitted	Does not need approval
Level 2 – Medium Risk	Open to more than general membership; under 300 attendees; social events (Ex: parties, bid days, probates, or any event deemed social by a university official); Any events booked in LSC 230, 241, 320, Ballrooms, and Theatre, Old Main Pit, Farrington Pit, or any off campus venue; Tabling in the plaza that is anything social in nature (Ex: pie in the face, dunk tanks) an organization fair, or takes up 3 more tabling spaces.	5 business days	President & Advisor + CAI/Club Sports/FSL/COM
Level 3 – High Risk	Any Level 2 event distinctions that also have 300+ attendees; alcohol; or hosted at Gibbs Ranch, Austin Hall, or Peabody Library	30 days	Level 2 approvers + University Event Safety Group

⚠ President & Advisor Approval Required: Once an event is submitted, the organization's President and Advisor must both approve the event in BearkathHQ within 2 business days. Campus Activities & Involvement, FSL, and Campus Recreation cannot begin their review until both approvals are received. Events that do not receive both President and Advisor approval within 2 business days will be automatically denied and must be resubmitted.

Level 2 Additional Requirements

- Events with 250+ attendees require a certified Crowd Control Manager present for the entire event (per NFPA 1, NFPA 101, International Fire Code, and 28 Tex. Admin. Code §34.303). All advisors must be trained and certified as Crowd Control Managers.
- Wristbands for attendance tracking may be required.
- Advisor attendance is recommended and may be required when the advisor must serve as Crowd Control Manager.

Level 3 Additional Requirements

- Requires review and approval by the University Event Safety Group.
- University Police Department (UPD) presence must be requested at least 30 days in advance and confirmed at least 15 days before the event. Events may be cancelled or rescheduled if UPD cannot be confirmed by the 15-day mark.
- Law enforcement request and confirmation documentation must be attached to the BearkathHQ Level 3 event submission.

General Event Prohibitions

- RSOs may not advertise any event as university-sponsored unless formally co-sponsored by a university department.
- RSOs are prohibited from partnering with third-party promoters for events on or off campus.
- RSOs inviting off-campus vendors (DJs, inflatables, etc.) must meet SHSU Compliance & Insurance standards.
- RSOs may not reserve university space on behalf of another entity.

7. Steps for Booking an Event

Follow these steps in order to ensure your event is properly approved before promotion begins.

- **Book Your Venue** — Secure your location before submitting anything else. Contact the appropriate facility (e.g., LSC, outdoor spaces, off-campus venue) to confirm availability and complete any required reservation forms.
- **Submit Marketing Materials for Approval** — Submit all promotional materials (flyers, social media graphics, banners, apparel, etc.) in BearkathHQ for review by Campus Activities & Involvement, Club Sports, FSL, or COM, as applicable. **Materials may not be distributed or posted until full event approval is received.** See Section 4 for full marketing requirements.
- **Submit the Event in BearkathHQ** — Submit your event in BearkathHQ within the required timeline for your event level (Level 2: at least 5 business days in advance; Level 3: at least 30 days in advance). Once submitted, the organization's President and Advisor must both approve the event in BearkathHQ within 2 business days or the submission will be automatically denied. See Section 5 for full event submission requirements.
- **Wait for Approval on Steps 1–3** — Do not begin promoting your event until your venue reservation is confirmed, your marketing materials are approved, and your BearkathHQ event submission has received full approval from all required parties. Promoting an event before all approvals are in place may result in disciplinary action.
- **Promote Your Event** — Once all approvals are confirmed, begin distributing your approved marketing materials. Post flyers only in approved locations with the required approval stamp from Campus Activities & Involvement (LSC 215). Follow all SHSU Posting & Distribution Guidelines.

8. Travel Requirements

- RSOs traveling 4+ hours from home campus must submit a Student Organization Travel Form via BearkathHQ at least 10 business days before departure, including a full participant list and emergency contact information.
- Travel leaders must carry an itinerary and participant list at all times. Each participant must carry an itinerary and travel leader contact info.
- For any emergency during domestic travel, call 911 immediately.

- Overnight travel requires a Clery Act Travel Form submitted to the University Police Department.
- Club Sports must follow travel policies designated by the Department of Campus Recreation.

9. Student Organization Conduct & Discipline

Any violation of this handbook will result in escalating disciplinary action as follows:

Level 1: Educational Intervention

Trigger: First violation of any student organization handbook guideline.

Required Actions:

- Required meeting between chapter leadership (President, Risk Manager, Social Chair) and Campus Activities & Involvement, FSL, or Campus Recreation staff.
- Chapter completes a written reflection including a corrective action plan (1–2 pages).

Level 2: Structured Accountability & Skill Building

Trigger: Second violation of any student organization handbook guideline.

Required Actions:

- All Level 1 requirements, plus:
- Mandatory risk management retraining for the executive board and all event planners (not limited to officers).
- Temporary requirement: all submissions (marketing, events, resources) must be submitted earlier than standard (+2 additional days), or a pre-submission consultation with staff is required.

Level 3: Loss of Privileges

Trigger: Third violation OR any high-risk violation of this handbook (as deemed by a university official).

Required Actions:

- Temporary restriction on RSO privileges (social probation), including any combination of: no social events, no off-campus events, no events with alcohol, loss of recruitment privileges, loss of marketing privileges.
- Restrictions remain until the chapter completes a restorative project, which may include: a risk management workshop for new members, development of an internal procedure checklist, a presentation to professional staff on lessons learned, or a staff-designated period (not to exceed one full academic year).

Level 4: Formal Conduct Process

Trigger: Continued noncompliance or intentional disregard for this handbook (as deemed by a university official).

Required Actions:

- Referral to formal organizational conduct through the Dean of Students' Office.
- Potential outcomes include: extended social suspension, national organization involvement, increased monitoring, or deactivation of the organization.

10. Grievances & Appeals

Filing a Complaint

Any member of the university community may file a complaint against an RSO via: the Student Organization Conduct-Grievance Form on BearkatHQ; the affiliated department (Club Sports, FSL, or COM); or the Incident Report Form on the

Dean of Students webpage. Complaints related to the Student Code of Conduct, high-level violations, or law will be referred to the Dean of Students Office or Office of Title IX & Discrimination Resolution.

Review Process

- University staff will investigate, notify the organization in writing of alleged violations, and provide the organization an opportunity to present relevant information.
- If found responsible, sanctions may include: suspension of facility/event/program rights; placement on Suspension of Recognition; or restorative practices.
- A suspended organization may not function on or off campus in any capacity; all privileges are withdrawn.

Appeals

- If the outcome is more severe, the organization may appeal in writing to the Director of Campus Activities & Involvement, Director of Campus Recreation, or Dean of Students (as applicable) within 5 business days of the decision.
- An appeal is not a rehearing. It must be based on: whether a fair hearing was provided; whether sanctions were appropriate; whether the finding was supported by evidence; or whether new evidence is available that was not available at the time of the original hearing.
- All supporting documentation must be submitted within 5 business days of filing the appeal notice. The Student Disciplinary Hearing Committee will respond within 10 business days of receiving all materials.

⚠ University staff reserve the right to adjudicate matters not explicitly outlined in any policy. All hazing matters will be investigated and adjudicated by the Dean of Students Office.

11. Related Policies & Statutes

In the event of a conflict, the more restrictive or preemptive authority prevails.

Reference	Scope
20 U.S.C. §1681 section (a)(6)	Membership non-discrimination exceptions
SHSU Expressive Activity Policy EA-1	Guest speakers and expressive activity
SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-14	Bank account naming restrictions
SHSU Finance & Operations Policy FO-64	Clery Act reporting obligations
SHSU Posting & Distribution of Printed Materials Policy	Marketing and posting compliance
SHSU Student Code of Conduct	Individual and organizational conduct
Texas Education Code §51.936, 51.9361, 51.9362	Training and advisor requirements
Stop Campus Hazing Act of 2024	Hazing prevention and reporting
TSUS Rules & Regulations, Chapter VI, Sec. 6.2	Financial management restrictions

The Department of Campus Activities & Involvement reserves the right to modify this handbook at any time. Updated versions will be made available to RSO presidents and advisors. This handbook is a companion to the RSO Resource Guide.